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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a model that can be used in many settings where there is a need to chart and evaluate continuous professional learning. Every use begins with assessing needs and defining goals for professional growth in context. Vertical movement along a spiral, with continuous support and coaching, indicates expanded capacity and maturation. The spiral models the continuous nature of learning through time and space. Four levels of evaluation of growth are indicated for use by the learner alone, jointly by learner and supervisor, or jointly by all stakeholders. Level 1 checks reaction to the appropriateness of the content and delivery of the just-completed learning opportunity. Level 2 asks what was learned during the learning session. Level 3 determines how behavior has changed as a result of the learning opportunity. Level 4 examines outcomes and results, linking results to the integration of new learning. The learning series begins with the introduction stage. Once started on the learning spiral, learners can move quickly into implementation. At an agreed-upon time after each learning opportunity, a follow-up evaluation is provided by the learning coach. Subsequent formative evaluations represent a joint undertaking of learner and supervisor, where anticipated outcomes are agreed upon. Eventually, a summative evaluation is conducted to examine behavior trends. Following evaluation, there is agreement by all parties that learning is facilitated through an ongoing series of formal, continuous learning opportunities and that growth can be seen as a spiral. (Contains 5 tables and 11 references.) (SM)

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A Spiral Plan for Delivery and Evaluation of Continuous Professional Development

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Adapted from the work of Michael Fullan; Donald Kirkpatrick; Art Costa , Bena Kallick

Introduction

The model can be used in many settings where it is desired to chart and evaluate continuous professional learning. In an educational setting, it can be used by individuals for self-evaluation, or by departments, schools and districts to support the growth and development of the entity and individuals. In an organizational setting, it similarly can be used by an individual, a department, or a division to plan and evaluate professional growth. Every use begins with assessing needs and defining goals for professional growth in context. Vertical movement along the spiral, with continuous support and coaching, indicates expanded capacity and maturation.

Glossary of Terms

- The right-hand arrow represents three ***stages of professional growth***. *Introduction* represents the time of first exposure to a new learning. *Implementation* indicates that the new learning is beginning to be put into practice. *Integration* means that the new learning has become incorporated to some degree into regular work practice. Next steps can include refining existing learning through practice, or starting over at *Introduction* in an area of new learning; in either case continuation along the learning spiral demonstrates deepening capacity.
- The left-hand arrow represents the time dimension, indicating that

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sufficient time must be allowed for learners to move through all the stages of new learning, and that differential rates of movement are acceptable and desirable.

- The spiral models the ***continuous nature of learning through time and space***, where time is structured for needed reflection and dialogue; and where physical and psychological elbow room is created,with sufficient material resources, as well as peer and supervisor support and coaching to implement and integrate the new learning, and risk-taking with failure is preferred to complacence.
- ***Four levels of evaluation*** of growth are indicated, for use by the learner alone, jointly by learner and supervisor, or jointly by all stakeholders. The learner's journey along the growth spiral determines the level of evaluation to be employed. Level One, **L_1**, checks *reaction* to the appropriateness of the content and delivery of the just-completed learning opportunity; Level Two, **L_2**, asks what was *learned* during the learning session. When employed at a later time as part of coaching follow up or formative evaluation, **L_2** asks about the status of implementation of the learning at the work site, as well as how future learning opportunity's content can be improved. This evaluative feedback is incorporated into subsequent deliveries of learning opportunities. Level Three, **L_3**, seeks to determine how *behavior* has changed as a result of the learning opportunity. This evaluation level shows behavior change trends which are related to the new learning.

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Level Four, **L4**, examines *outcomes and results*, and seeks to link results to the Integration of the new learning. (From Kirkpatrick).

- Movement along the growth spiral through different learning stages can be related also to moving among different levels of evaluation, including moving back and forth among levels.

New Learning, in Context

Embarking on the continuous learning spiral begins with a comprehensive *needs-assessment and strength inventory,* within the organizational and community context, examining qualitative and quantitative data from many sources. Long- and short-term learning goals are identified to meet the needs defined by all members of the learning community *Alignment* of the learning content with the goals, and approval of the learning outcomes are decided by the community, made up of all stakeholders. To be effective, this alignment process must include the learners in the learning opportunities, the learning coaches, and learners' supervisors. Finally, an integral part of the learning spiral process is continuous *reflection* on the learning plan and its intended outcomes.

A *learning series,* jointly designed, includes defining learner outcomes; designing content relevant to goals; providing follow up support by the learning coach; providing formative support from supervisors, with enough resource materials to implement the "new" learning; peer support, including observation with non-evaluative feedback; and providing electronic mentoring support from peers and learning coaches.

Following the delivery of the first of a learning series, an *evaluation in-*

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strument with two parts is administered to learners. With Level One, L_1, evaluation, learners react to the content and delivery, also providing feedback to the learning coach and the organization about the coach's methods and preparedness. Level Two, L_2, evaluation, an assessment of learning, solicits learners' perceptions of what was learned, plus where and how they believe they can begin to apply the new learning.

The Learning Series Begins: The Spiral is Entered

The **Introduction** stage begins when learners decide the content of the new learning, how to deliver it, and how to apply it at their work sites. The Introduction stage can have any duration and can occur repeatedly, since new needs demand new learning. This means learners, encompassing both individuals and organizations, constantly enter the Introduction stage of the learning spiral. Once started on the learning spiral, learners can move relatively quickly into **Implementation**. This is so because in the change process, rather than finding clear beginning and ending points between Introduction and Implementation, "leaky boundaries" allow continuous traffic between stages of the growth process.

Within an agreed-upon time after each learning opportunity, sufficient to allow for learner experimentation and growth, a *followup evaluation,* L_2, is provided to learners by the learning coach. After even as little as a month's application, learners can give experiential feedback to their coaches about how the new learning has been used, what implementation and coaching needs have emerged, and how delivery of the learning content can be improved to make content more accessible to learners. In addition,

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consistent in-person or email coaching must be provided by peers and coaches in order for the new learning to begin to be implemented.

Reflection is Important

Improving the content of a learning session, either for subsequent learners' benefit, or to enhance follow up opportunities for introductory learners, can be handled well through reflection and dialogue. Sufficient time for *reflection* on the learning and implementation processes is essential to their continued vibrancy, and for their relationship to intended outcomes. Dialogue about learner progress toward the intended outcomes, through a focus group to share strategies/ successes / frustrations, or as part of subsequent sessions in the series, speeds learners' implementation of new skills. Sharing and applying anecdotal and experiential insights gained from implementation practices informs and shapes changing learner needs. Changes in the delivery of content for subsequent learning opportunities is much more powerful with learner input.

Putting the Learning in Place

As the spiral of continuous professional development expands upward and outward, learners move more fully into **Implementation**. This stage represents critical and important times and places for establishing interdependent, continuing relationships : between learners and supervisors; among learners; and between learners and their supporting communities. Thus, it is acceptable and expected that while learners are reflecting on their own implementation of learning, supervisors are examining learners' work for examples of regular, appropriate use of the new learning content.

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Supportive, constructive supervision is essential to sound implementation of new practices. Learners also must seek the active support of their supervisors, to facilitate local implementation as part of a larger contextual change process. Supervisor support can appear in many forms: formative supervision with constructive feedback; time to engage in library or action research; time to visit peer schools and to entertain peer observers; and financial support for needed materials to effectively implement and assess new learning.

A Collaborative Evaluation with Reflection

Subsequent evaluations, **L_2** and **L_3**, represent a joint undertaking of learner and supervisor, where anticipated outcomes are agreed upon, as well as identifying barriers to implementation. Thus, in the Introduction stage, a supervisor can expect to see only beginning steps toward use of new learning; in the Implementation stage, greater evidence of application of new learning should be obvious in learners' behavior; in Integration, the "new" learning is fully evident both in behavior and measurable outcomes. New learning and behavior are embedded in the learner's practice, along with regular reflection and refinement, using all available support mechanisms. Research supports the concept that successful practice precedes and supports changing beliefs.

After the delivery of each successive session in the learning series, Level One, **L_1**, and Level Two, **L_2**, evaluations occur immediately, followed soon thereafter by a second Level Two, **L_2**, narrative evaluation, and at least one dialogic focus group session. Depending on learners' input and

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reflections, the learning series' ultimate goals as well as interim delivery modes may be refined and modified.

Into The Home Stretch

At the **Integration** stage, learner and supervisor again jointly conduct a formative evaluation, employing Level Three, **L3**, and Level Four, **L4**, techniques, focusing on behavior changes and results related to the "new" learning from the learning series. As always, formative support is sought from supervisors, as learners demonstrate movement toward consolidation and integration of new learning. A necessary component following each evaluation is joint reflection by learners and their learning coach regarding the outcomes of the training series, with modification of the learning series sessions as needed to meet the refined goals.

Summative Evaluation

At the **Integration** stage, a summative evaluation is conducted, using Level Three, **L3**, and Level Four, **L4**, techniques to examine behavior trends: Level Three, **L3**, highlights *trends* showing growth and positive movement. Level Four, **L4**, shows quantifiable, measurable growth, meeting or approximating agreed-upon outcome criteria. Dialogue about these evaluation levels provides strong indications for future professional development to meet improvement goals. The participant at this point may choose to initiate another learning spiral, with new learning content to meet newly-identified goals, or choose to consolidate and deepen existing knowledge. In either case, there is acknowledgment by all parties that learning is

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facilitated through an ongoing series of formal, continuous learning opportunities and that growth can be seen as a spiral.

Conclusion

A commitment to ongoing professional development can be charted at Introduction / Implementation / Integration locations along a spiral of continuous learning: learners constantly are at various stages of development, and benefit greatly from peer and supervisory support on their learning journey.

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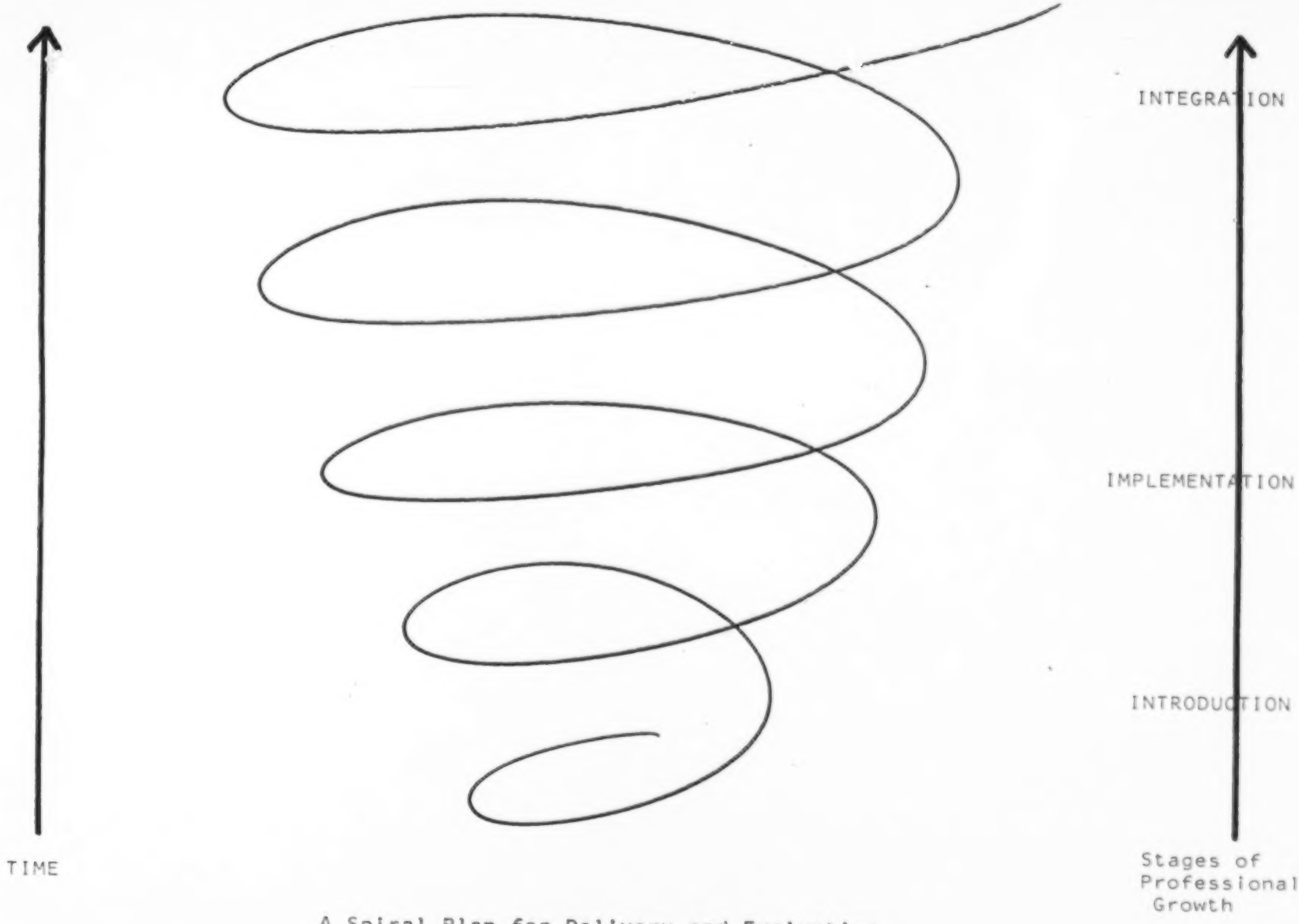

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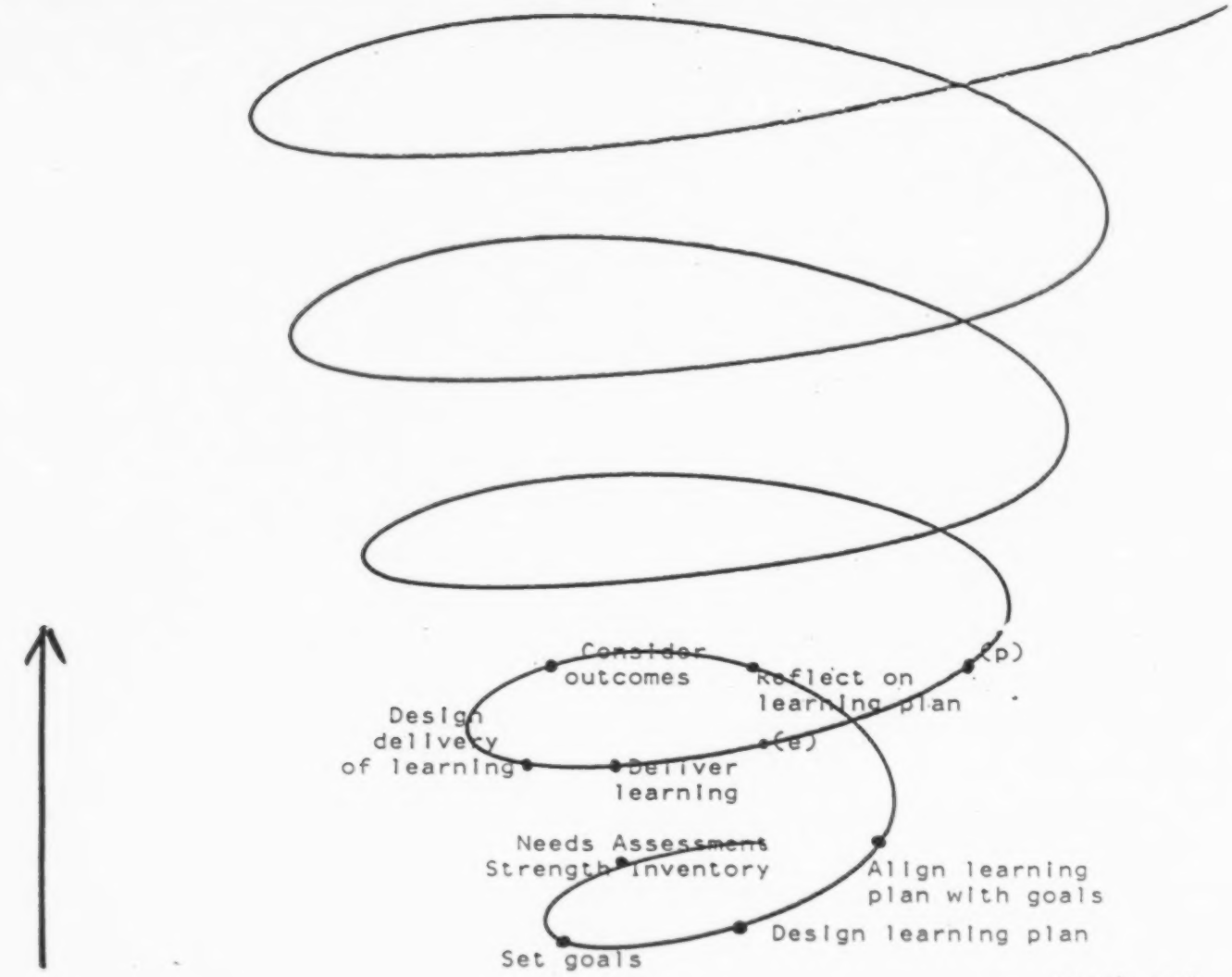

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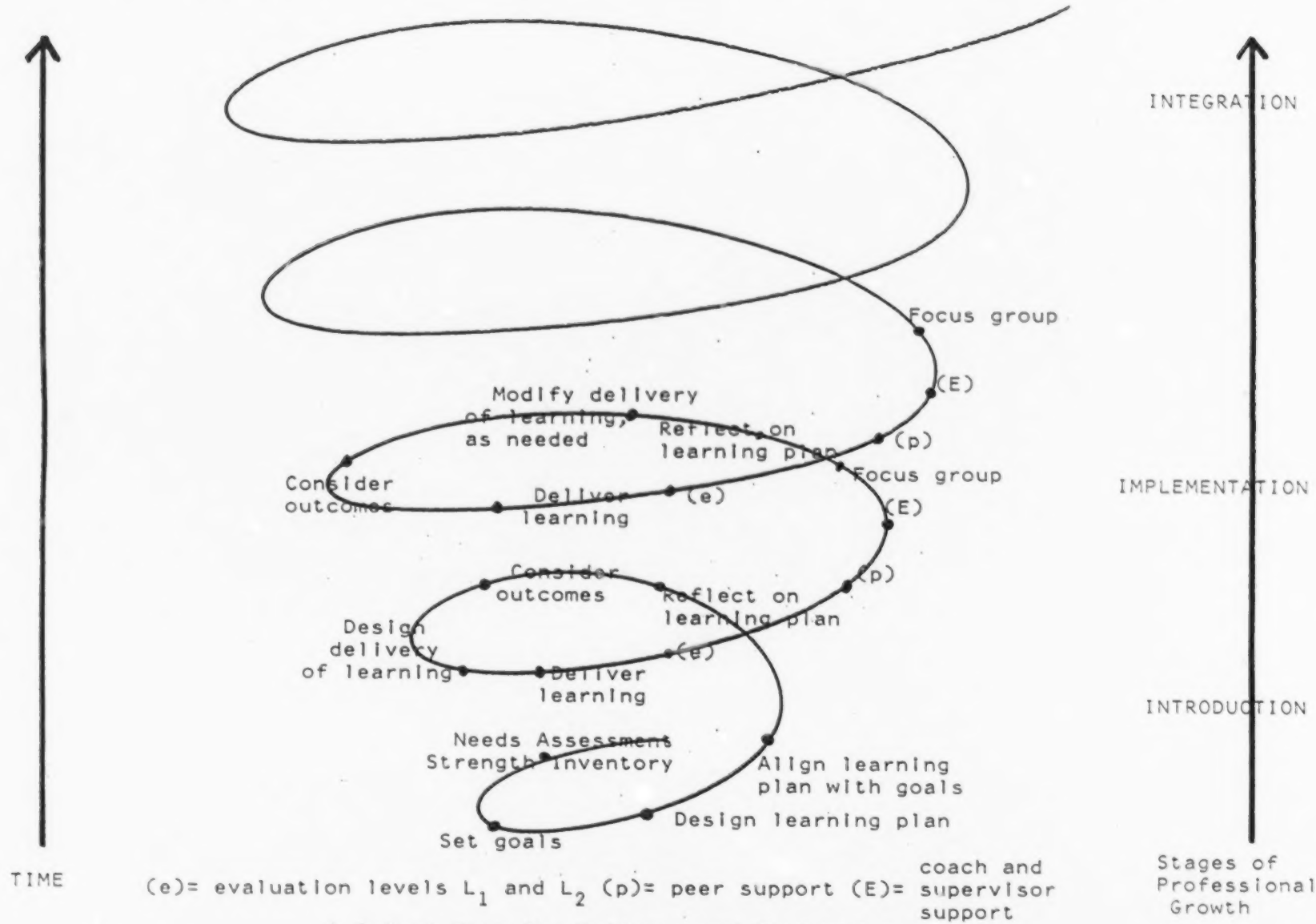

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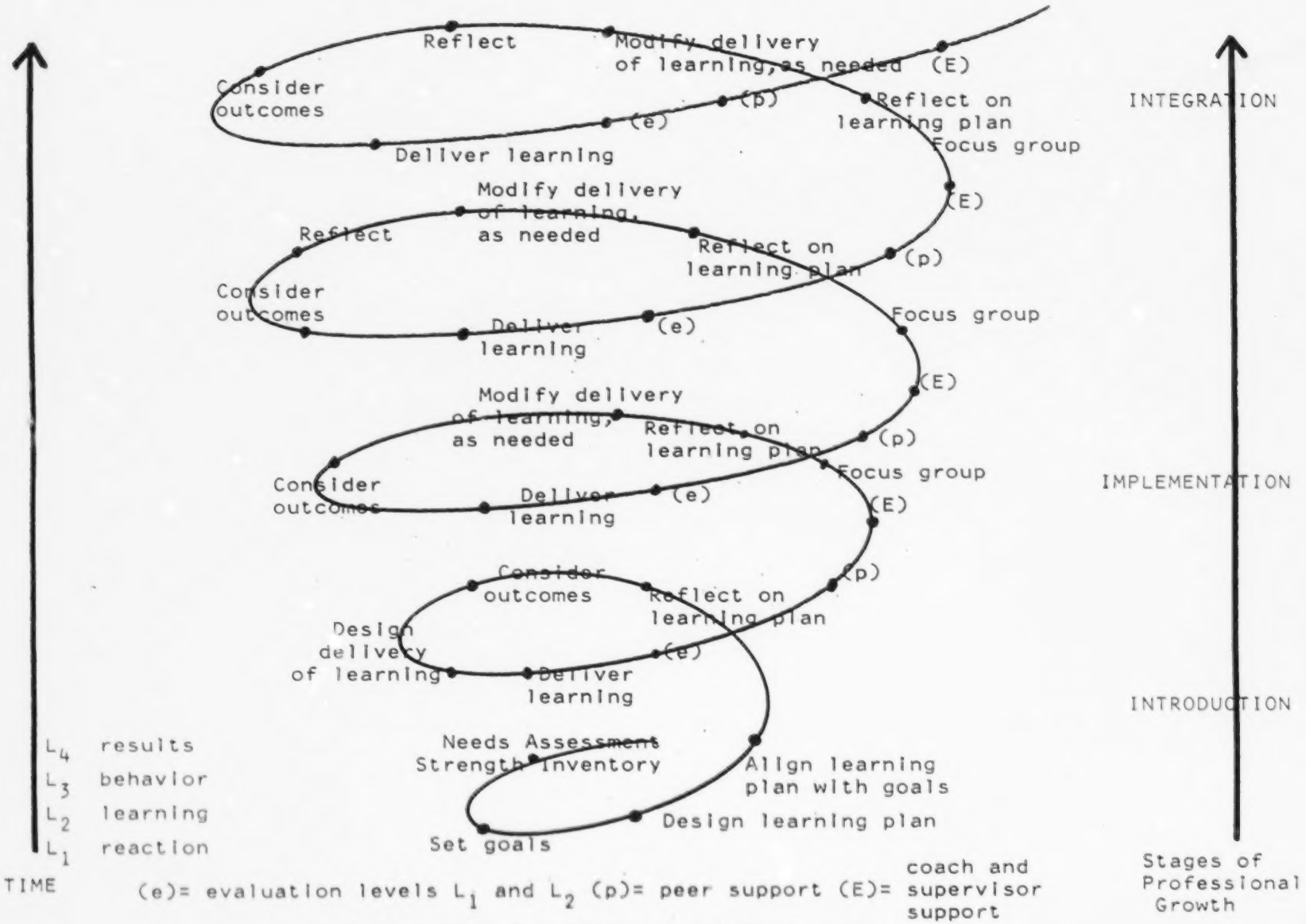

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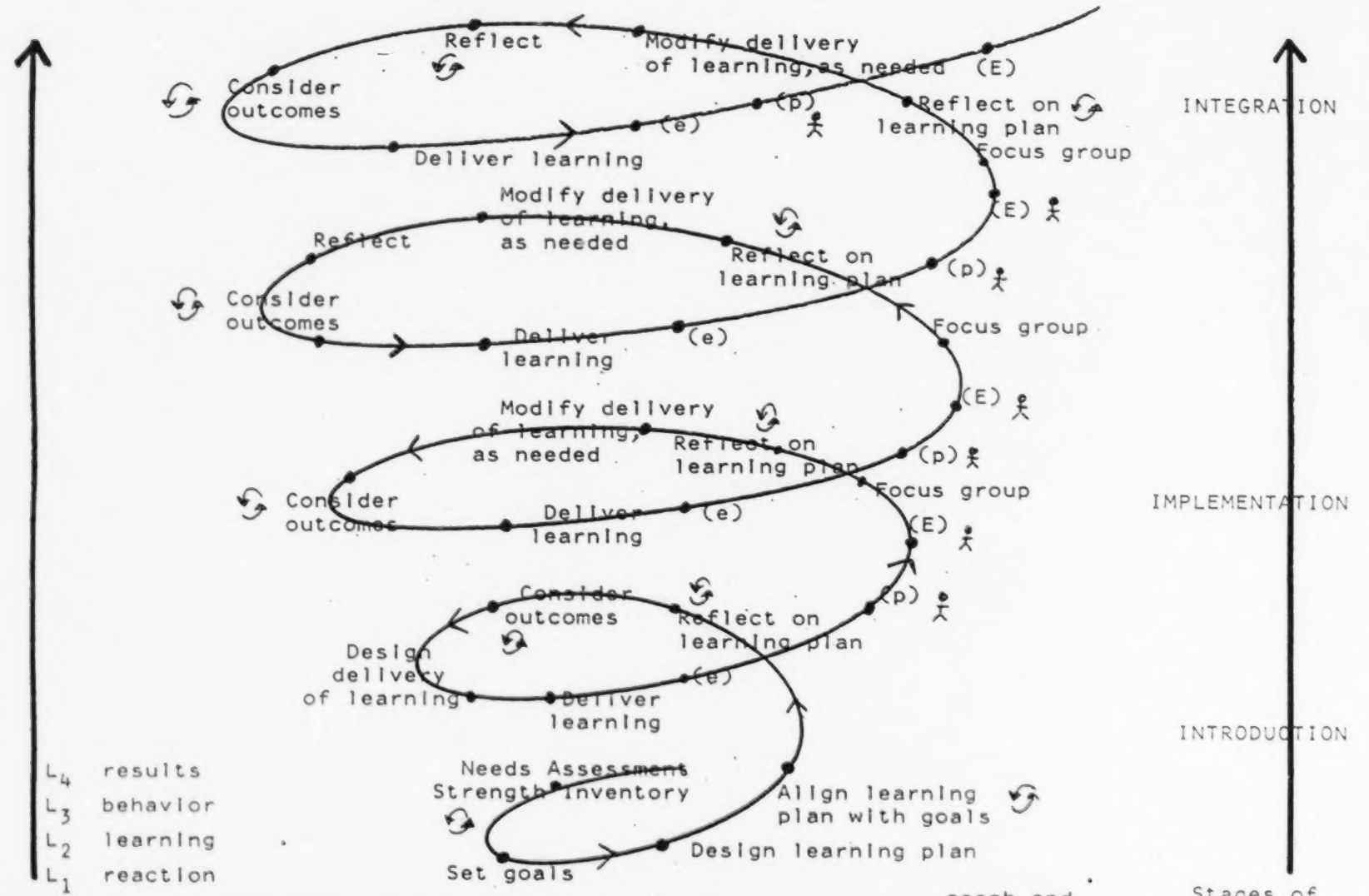

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= feedback loop

= personal interactions

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